

Feeding A Hungry World Is Job One

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Every time a news magazine or TV network comes out with a report mischaracterizing animal agriculture, we turn our attention to what was said and how we can respond.

A number of activists seem intent on destroying animal agriculture. Meanwhile, the government keeps imposing regulations that are more and more burdensome.

Farmers continue to work their way through all of the distractions, which is good because they have a daunting task ahead, and that is feeding a hungry world.

The world population is expected to grow by 37 percent over the next 40 years. And, the world's appetite for food will grow by an even faster rate because of higher living standards in developing countries. Essentially, that means doubling world food production by the year 2050 to head off mass hunger, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Already, 15 percent of the world's population goes to bed hungry every night.

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear Roger Thurow, former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* and co-author of the book, "Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty." He said 25,000 people in the world die every day from hunger, malnutrition and related diseases.

"Where's the outrage on that?" he asked.

People have made it a priority to eradicate AIDS in the world. Why not hunger? he asked.

"Let's make ending hunger the next great populist cause of this decade," he said. "Ending hunger through agricultural development can be the singular achievement of our generation."

Thurow was one of the speakers at a recent Agricultural Solutions Media Summit sponsored by the chemical company BASF. Collectively, the speakers agreed there is a big task ahead, but that agriculture has made huge advances in productivity over the past 60 years and may be able to continue improving under the right circumstances.

- In 1940, one farmer produced enough food for 19 people. By 1970, it had risen to 73 people. And, currently, one farmer produces enough food for 155 people.
- From 1970 to 2010, the world population doubled, but farmland didn't. More and more people were basically able to live off the same amount of land.

As productivity has improved, so too have the techniques for preserving resources. For instance, farmers now grow 70 percent more corn from every pound of fertilizer than they did in 1970.

And, they are doing a better job of conserving water and the soil.

The whole idea, several speakers at the symposium noted, is to “grow more with less.” Rather than cutting down forests to create more cropland, the challenge is to get the most out of existing farmland and natural resources — all the while trying to feed a hungry world.

[Here is an interesting YouTube video on this point.](#)

Let’s hope that productivity can continue to increase. It will take new technology, education and a lot of hard work. And, it will take focus — despite the ongoing distractions from animal-rights groups, climate extremists and certain government officials.

Source: Tom Quaife, Dairy Herd